THE BEASTHOUSE

A PERSONAL JOURNAL, BY THE SON OF ONE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY'S LEADING MASTER-CRIMINALS

An Introduction

Tips for the nineteenth-century predator, number one: though you may have difficulty remembering your plan, do NOT write your intentions in large chalk letters on public fences, as this may alert your prey that something is amiss. In most cases, a post-it note will be quite sufficient.

I should begin by offering a word of congratulation, even thanks, to those who may be reading this journal in the "modern" age: I find the early twenty-first century to be a most satisfactory era from which to organise a gargantuan underworld empire, and would thoroughly recommend it as a place of business for any mastermind of the Victorian persuasion who might find himself frozen in ice for 120 years, transported through time by a chair with large brass levers attached, or simply spirited into the future by a magic fog. Indeed, so suitable is this epoch that I now spend at least three months of every year in 2008, and would probably spend more if such a thing were permitted by the British tax laws.

Naturally, I find it unwise to spend the same three months of every year in

2008. The exact period of my stay is governed by the activities in which I find myself engaged. The act of Sinister Plotting is very much an affair for the spring, a time when Parliament is in session, and politicians of the lower orders can be bribed to ignore the great Chav-boats that carry "urban" slaves out to sea along the Thames (and thereafter to the "urban" rubber plantations of the 1800s). By the same token, Sinister Brooding is an event for summer; Sinister Market-Gardening is best suited to autumn; and it may be considered gauche to attempt Sinister Tobogganing in any season other than winter. By and large, however, I attempt to spend my time in those weeks of 2008 which - by law and custom - are set aside for the shooting of the Famous Grouse. Those of you who have never undertaken this pastime should consider doing so as soon as your social circumstances permit. Shooting the Famous Grouse is perhaps the finest of all sports, since it combines the twin activities of grouse-shooting and celebrity stalking. This makes it 100% more Sinister than any other gentlemanly pursuit, which I find saves time.

I would, in fact, go as far as to say that the wildlife of your century is of the greatest interest to me. Please bear in mind that although I consider myself well-travelled, all natural-born citizens of the nineteenth century are parochial by twenty-first-century standards. Television is not something with which I was raised, and in its modern sense, "celebrity culture" is both a wonder and an abomination: in my youth, we created our own equivalent of Heat magazine by cutting bits off a dead Frenchman's face until his countenance resembled that of a well-known public figure in an embarrassing pose. I remain amazed that in your "modern" era, satellite broadcasting and digital television have allowed you to ignore the entire world simply by flicking a switch. And more than any other genre, I feel the wildlife documentary to be the most fascinating product of this global culture. It constantly astonishes me to see such remarkable, far-distant vistas of the natural world, and to witness the staggering array of exotic creatures which my own generation somehow failed to hunt to extinction. I occasionally even travel back to my native century, specifically to hunt down and slaughter an animal whose existence has only been made known to me by one of these programmes, just to see the look on David Attenborough's face when he reaches the end of his four-thousand-mile-trip to the Serengeti and finds no life there whatsoever.

On these occasions, Mr Attenborough may not even recall his reasons for visiting the region, though a half-formed tear in his eye often hints at a partly-understood sense of loss. Should ever you find yourself sitting through an episode of Life on Earth and thinking, "hang on, didn't there used to be

more animals in this?", then you now know the cause. I look forward to the day when I might even have the ability to travel into the prehistoric ages, there to hunt the behemoths of the Jurassic into an early grave, simply for the joy of watching the BBC's Walking Without Dinosaurs.

David Attenborough tells his camera crew that he had a dream about something large, black and hairy sitting behind him here, although he can no longer remember what.

To resume: it has been put to me that I might wish to share these thoughts and memories, reflections on a life which - by various methods of experimentation and genetic vampirism - has so far spanned three centuries. It has been suggested that I should do this partly for the sake of posterity, but mainly in the hope that it might lead to some expansive television adaptation featuring this era's leading actors, comedians, and prostitutes. I understand that aethernet "blogs" of a controversial nature are something of a current fashion, and that in one instance, the musings of a particularly supple London harlot become a successful televisual production entitled The Secret Diary of a Call-Girl. Since even the greatest engineers of Victoria's Britain failed to develop a means by which something could still qualify as "secret" after being published on the world's most accessible information medium and then broadcast to every home in the nation, I once again find myself impressed by twenty-first-century ingenuity, and remain curious as to how this programme was prevented from falling into the hands of foreign powers. I trust, however, that my own aether-journal will be as great a success. And that my own part will be taken in the dramatic version by that man from Life on Mars, the one everybody likes.

(Although on this subject… I confess, the rapid disappearance of history's

wildlife may be having an adverse affect on the British Broadcasting Corporation's dedication to factual programming. Whereas Life on Earth was a serious and commendable attempt to record our planet's rapidly-contracting biosphere, Life on Mars seemed somewhat less credible in its depiction of a coherent ecosystem. Though it was entertaining to see now-extinct species like Racist Policemen Who Are Also Somehow Meant To Be Amusing and Mancunians With A Sense Of Civic Pride, many of the sequences appeared to be unconvincingly staged rather than filmed in the creatures' natural environment. And I believe myself to be correct in saying that the "get hit by a car and knocked thirty years into the future" method of time-travel was utterly debunked by Faraday in 1865, after he ran over James Clerk Maxwell's legs with a twenty-four-horse "time carriage", not entirely for scientific reasons.)

Criminology

After much debate, the Syndicate decided to order the assassination, "just in case he talks".

It should be remembered that as a member of what might be called the "para-legal" profession, I learned my trade on the streets of nineteenth-century Limehouse, where the rituals that marked a young man's passage into the criminal fraternity involved far more than a handful of juvenile convictions and some polite sodomy. Today, initiates into America's Mafia families "make their bones" by performing a simple execution. In the mid-1800s, the process literally involved stealing the complete skeleton from a dozing East End costermonger, without the corpulent victim noticing its absence. The wisest of the "pick-paunches" would accomplish this task by having an attractively-attired woman or unusually-deformed dog on hand, to distract their mark should he rise from his slumber. Younger and less artful urchins would simply tie the man's shoelaces together, thus ensuring that

should he attempt to pursue them before the removal of his hipbone, he might collapse into an oozing pile of blubber, gin and rhyming-slang. One could be assured, however, that no policeman would intervene in any of this. It was simply not the way.

One of the many, many things which impresses me so greatly about your "modern" twenty-first century is the dedication of its police force, a dedication which would have been unthinkable 120 years ago, when a policeman's lot was not a happy one and there were far more palpable reasons to hate the Irish than a lurking and ill-defined sense of "you never know, they might still be up to something". I have a natural interest in criminology, given that the commissioning of the Perfect Crime is in my purview, yet the truth is that the police of my own era made things far too simple. If one did not wish to be identified as a criminal, then one would simply endeavour to avoid wearing a skullcap or finishing every sentence "… oy vey". If one did not wish to be arrested while walking the streets of the city with a human corpse, then one would simply dress up as a lion, and claim that one was part of an exotic African tableaux on day release from the Natural History Museum. This would not be possible in 2008, and not simply because the lion costume would have to be animatronic. In this glorious new era, every aspect of police work has seen the application of the scientific method.

Detection, interrogation, evidence-gathering, the concealment of vital information, the arbitrary execution of suspects, even the formation of secret cliques with a barely-disguised agenda of racial violence… all of these were practised as purely amateur pastimes during the days of the Empire, yet now each one is considered to be a science in itself. Nobody in the mid-1800s could have conceived of entities with sobriquets such as "CSI", "FBI", "CID", "MFI" and "CI5", even if the concept of "letters" had been widely-understood by Cockneys. I recently heard an eminent police scientist, speaking on one of those late-night "True Crime" television entertainments which I believe to be popular with semi-literate hicks and law-enforcement officials alike, state that "in the case of a murder, our job is to be the voice of the victim". This notion, elegant and beautiful as it is, would simply not occur to any police officer of the nineteenth century. No old-fashioned English beat-bobby would be capable of such dignity, or such compassion. "In the case of a murder, our job is to be the voice of the victim."

I chose to test the truth of this statement by murdering Joe Pasquale, if for no other reason than to hear the police do that voice at the press conference. Tragically, the police came to the conclusion that it was beneath their dignity

to be the voice of the victim in this instance. The Chief Constable did mention that he does quite a good Ross Kemp, which I take to be a form of invitation, and this is something I may consider in future. However, I have to view the Pasquale Affair as a rare failure on my part, hence my decision to quietly expunge it from the historical record and replace the late Mr Pasquale with a generically-engineered gnome of some description.

Whether I was able to improve on the concept, I shall not say. Nor shall I confirm or deny that I may have devised the Perfect Crime. I shall merely leave you to dwell on the implications of the "voice of the victim" method, and to consider the recent, unexpected death of Marcel Marceau. About which, the police are saying nothing.

History

Another example of twenty-first-century mores affecting nineteenth-century society.

Since we now live in an age when we can freely travel between my own native nineteenth century and your gloriously unconcerned twenty-first century - an age which might be seen as a 150-year-long "buffer zone" between the distant past and the post-apocalyptic future,

a *dam*-age, if you will - we should address the question of whether this might create unforeseen social problems on either side of the twentieth-century gulf. There are many who fear that the historical sanctity of the Victorian era may be violated by visitors from later periods, and that the mid-1800s may somehow find itself "polluted" by the culture of the early 2000s. Some have pointed out, for example, that the arrival of modern-day gun-culture and "gangsta rap" has begun to introduce whole new forms of violence, terror and social unease to Dickensian London. To which I say: good. As the head of an international criminal empire with interests in large-scale arms manufacture, this is exactly the sort of thing I like to hear.

It *is* unquestionably true that the culture of 2008 has had an immediate and savage impact on nineteenth-century society. Whereas the urchins of the capital once wanted nothing more than to pick a pocket or two, now their greatest desire is to pop a cap in Old Mr Chuzzlewit's ass. The Cockney delinquents, in particular, have taken to the gangsta lifestyle with some enthusiasm: they feel it speaks to them on a quite profound level, resonating with their own cultural preference for urban squalor and foetid, unapologetic misogyny. Yet this is not a thing to be lamented. These chimney-sweeps-turned-motherfuckers have very much made the art-form their own, as witnessed by (for example) the vernacular poetry of gun-toting rap combo Artful D and the Guttersnipers:

'Yo, I got more problems than I can tell of,
My bitch is syphilitic, her nose just fell off.'

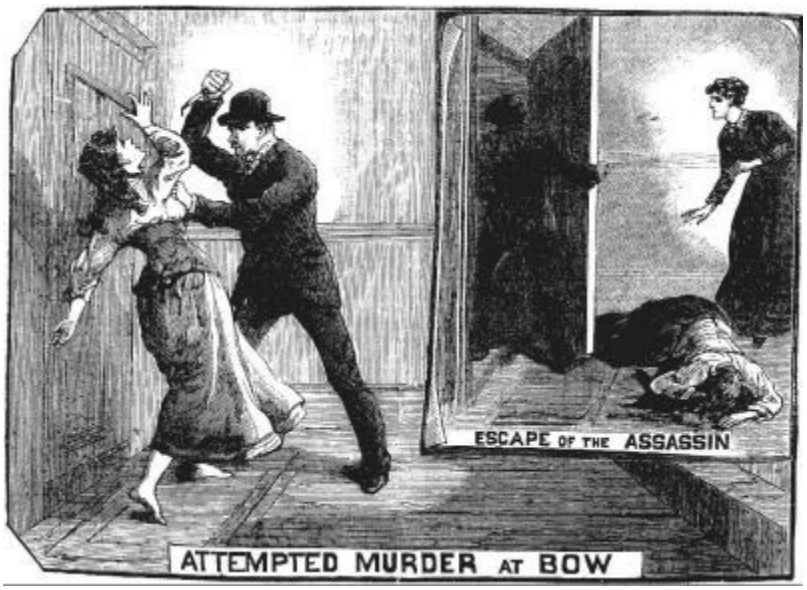
Little wonder that if one consults the records of the British Library, then one will find that Lytton Strachey's historical masterwork *Eminent Victorians* has now been retitled *Eminem Victorians*. And though it may be true that 1848 has recently suffered its first wave of drive-by shootings - if I may use the vulgar form of the word "recently" in this context, and if I may indeed employ the modern style by beginning a sentence with "and" - even *this* represents a form of creativity, since I know for a fact that the only guns available in the late 1840s were artillery weapons left over from the US-Mexican War, and it can be something of a challenge to hit a bystander with a twelve-pound cannon from the roof of a moving horse-and-trap.

But if we truly have anything of value to learn from your world of tomorrow, then it may

simply be this: the notion of absolute consumer-driven self-obsession, unhindered by taste, restraint, or any concept of moral consequence. The business practises of the late 1800s have always been rather shackled by the average citizen's concern over questions such as "what will happen if the children see?", "what will everyone think of this when I get to Heaven?", "is my dead husband watching me from the spirit realm?" and even "is it really ethical to make the coolies do all the work, even if those people *are* so much better at sweating than us?". For every Benjamin Disraeli who has merely wished the people to enjoy themselves, there has been a meddling William Gladstone to insist that it may be in some way *wrong* to use Indian children as cavity insulation. Fortunately, the Britain of 2008 has no such awkward difference of opinion between its political parties, and its argot has no equivalent of the phrase "morally uplifting". This has allowed our sweatshops to become even more abusive while producing even less of actual value.

This is particularly true of the White Peacock Syndicate's toy division, the Peking Panda Parts Company, which is even now using Oriental children to make interactive "My Chinese Pal" toys capable of asking questions like "will you be my friend?", "I *like* the Opium Wars, don't you?" and "why do I feel as if I'm a sliver of ten-year-old's brain-tissue that's been trapped in a small plastic box?". We can confidently predict that in the years to come, every cultural movement from Marxism to female suffrage will exist as nothing more than an excuse for merchandising. We might even imagine that by 1905, no little girl will be content without her poseable action-figure of Emmeline Pankhurst, with eagle eyes and realistic grip. The latter feature being particularly useful for holding on to railings.

Biology



Tips for the nineteenth-century predator, number two: try using doors to escape the scene of the crime. The diagram shows you how.

It could be said that although I may not have been precisely *destined* for my role in life, I was at least *designed* for it. As we have no doubt already established, my father possessed one of the most inventive, most tortuous, most convoluted minds of the nineteenth century, and it can be considered a testament to his genius that he could use this great intellect to sire a child without the immediate intervention of his body. Amidst the criminal underworld of the age, his creations were as numerous as they were unseemly. His particular field of interest lay in the biological sciences, with particular reference to the breeding of giant scorpions, poisonous fungi, and the occasional gigantic glowing hound. What he lacked was an obvious heir.

My father was quite careful about the manner of my siring. It should be remembered that until the early years of the twentieth century, there was a common belief in the theory of "maternal impression": the notion that if something distressed the mind of an expectant woman, then the nature of her fear would imprint itself upon her unborn child. It was believed, for example, that "Elephant Man" Joseph Merrick gained his unsightly form because his mother was startled by an elephant while he still lay in the womb (though since his mother spent most of her life confined to her home in Leicester, being startled by an elephant would surely have been more of a freakish occurrence than giving birth to a

hopelessly deformed child... we shall return to the Merrick family later). And I should say now that despite the pooh-poohing of the modern medical establishment, I believe the doctrine of "maternal impression" to have more weight than current thinking would suggest. True, we might ask questions such as "if a child always looks like the thing that scared its mother, then why weren't more children born looking like the opening titles of *Tales of the Unexpected* in the 1980s?", but the theory would explain a great deal.

It would, for one thing, tell us why so many men resemble enormous cocks. An awful lot of women must surely be terrified by enormous cocks, either at the moment of conception or shortly beforehand. Other women may be scared of pregnancy, and sure enough, many children are born looking like babies (though not in my father's house, as this would have been considered common). Indeed, we might stretch the theory and suppose that children may also resemble what the *man* was afraid of during the procreative act, which would explain why Michael Portillo is the very image of Going Floppy Halfway Through.

Though I may have been conceived by my father's disembodied hatred of all other human life rather than his physical presence, I nonetheless had to spend the *de rigueur* nine months within my mother's womb before my birth. During those months, my father took full advantage of the biological doctrines of the day. Determined that his firstborn son should be an unapologetic monster, capable of taking on his own mantle, he scientifically tormented my mother with every horror known to humanity in the hope that some of it might "rub off" on me. Sure enough, after suffering those nine months of abuse, agony and psychological torture, my mother gave birth to a child who bore a striking resemblance to the thing she feared most: my father. This alone should be proof that "maternal impression" holds at least *some* truth.

In today's world, I notice that many children bear striking resemblances to their fathers. This is, I think, a sad indictment of the way men still mistreat women: if their mothers were so appalled by their fathers' behaviour that the fear imprinted itself on the embryo, then few families can be truly close. Whenever I see a child that does *not* resemble its father - perhaps through having hair of a colour which matches neither parent, or through being of a different race altogether, as happens a great deal on London's council estates - I

congratulate those parents on presenting such a fine example of a happily-integrated family unit. I remain astonished at how frequently this is taken to be a form of sarcasm.

Joseph Merrick (1862 - 1890)

The Athena Company later admitted that the poster "wasn't quite as successful as the one of the topless man holding the baby".

Before going any further, I should raise a point of historical accuracy. In the modern age, sources differ as to whether the so-called "Elephant Man" bore the name of *John* Merrick or *Joseph* Merrick. As an erstwhile acquaintance of Merrick's, I should clarify the situation by explaining that although "Joseph" was the given name that appeared on his birth certificate, most of us referred to him by his nickname. We called him "John", because that was the name of an elephant we knew.

Though I knew him as a youth, I never met Merrick during his seminal "freakshow" period. I was reacquainted with him much later, when we were both making regular appearances on the 1970s chat-show circuit. You may recall that when the technology first became available

for celebrities to travel between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, navigation was still a difficulty. The most common contraption for making such a sojourn, far from being an elegant Wellsian time-machine of brass and leather, was Dr Barnado's Patented Chrono-Ambulatory Tunnel (then recently rebranded, having originally been launched as Dr Barnado's Patented Hole Into Nowhere for Getting Rid of the Little Bastards). In part, this would explain why so many B-list names of the 1800s became mired in the early twenty-first century, thus adding to the current celebrity-glut: I need hardly point out that no "modern" society, with a belief in mandatory schooling and universal literacy, could possibly have produced Kate Thornton. Merrick, however, had been fortuitous enough to find himself washed ashore in the 1960s.

This era, with its unique combination of post-imperial guilt and widespread interest in television wildlife programmes, was ideal for an artiste of his calibre and unusual bone-structure. Those familiar with television history will recall the notorious footage of his appearance on *Blue Peter*, during which he caused presenter John Noakes to slip on the wet floor. Merrick was embarrassed by this, at the time, but was able to laugh about it later. Especially after his colossal head caused his neck to tip back and deprive his brain of oxygen, at which point he found himself laughing at absolutely everything.

I met Merrick whilst appearing on the *Parkinson* programme in 1976, and we immediately renewed our childhood bond. I was pleased to converse with an individual more repellently scarred than myself, and in return, he was overjoyed to meet someone who never offered him a bun. The other guest on the programme that night was Johnny Morris, which irritated the Elephant Man somewhat: whenever Merrick would open his mouth, Morris would attempt to provide his voice. Merrick's subsequent stabbing of the presenter's face delighted me as much as it delighted the nation, yet in many ways, I now feel it represents his finest work. It was perhaps inevitable that during the 1980s, environmentalist groups would convince him to speak out against the ivory trade, but this obviously left us on opposing sides of the moral argument. He felt that the hunting of his elephantine blood-kin was an unacceptable anachronism in a twentieth-century world, while I felt that if the fabled Elephant's Graveyard never actually existed, then we should endeavour to create it. Suspecting that he was being "eco-friendly" simply to curry favour with the liberal '80s audience, I accused him of being a sycophant, and was rather put out when he interpreted it as an obscure racial slur.

Merrick died in 1890, on exactly the date prophesied by the history books. As a frequent visitor to the twentieth century, he was of course aware of his predicted demise, yet returned to that fateful day in order to complete an "ironic" photo-shoot for *GQ* magazine which was intended to make him "look dead". He had been assured that Health and Safety officials would prevent his actual passing, but sadly, they failed to take into account the inhuman quantity of cocaine in his system. Since plastic surgeons had grafted an actual trunk onto Merrick's face in 1983 - his own idea, an attempt to "live up to the dream" which may explain Michael Jackson's subsequent obsession with his bones - he had developed the party-piece of sticking the trunk into toilet cubicles to purloin other people's narcotics, and this was ultimately his undoing.

In 2007, a Channel 4 documentary team attempted to investigate Merrick's genetic makeup by analysing the DNA of his closest living relatives. As the programme explained, however: 'Merrick never had any children.' This may be the most unnecessary statement in the whole of human history.

Cancer

The Mahatma's open address to the Muslim and Hindu clerics of India, 1946, with myself in attendance (third row, second left, in the distinctive devil-rabbit mask). The individual with whom I can be seen sharing a joke is a carefully-disguised Bernard Bresslaw, studying for his later role in Carry On Up the Khyber.

As one might have expected, much of my life has been spent in my father's shadow, or avoiding my father's shadow, or living in mortal fear that my father may find a way of detaching his shadow from his person and sending it up a drainpipe to strangle me during my sleep. Indeed, there was a period in my younger days when I would actively deny my heritage, always answering "no" to the question "were you force-bred by appalling and inhuman means during the 1870s as the heir to the planet's second-most grotesque criminal empire?". Even on those occasions when I would answer "yes", I would at least attempt to appear ironic while doing so.

I have even denied his very name. On occasion, I would meet representatives of high society - ignorant of my true identity - who would politely question my father's nature, and ask to what profession and class he might belong. To which I would lie, and answer: 'I fear my father is dead. He died of the Big C.'

'The Big C?' they would say.

'Yes,' I would tell them. 'He was on the *Titanic*.'

I was of the belief that this amusement, being a pun, would work rather better during society soirees than on the printed page. Yet without exception, those with whom I was in conversation would simply stare at me, bemused. After a while, I realised that the joke would probably be more successful after 1912, when the *Titanic* would actually sink.

Eventually, while on an armaments trading excursion to 1914, I received the perfect opportunity when an eminent Germanic prince said to me: 'You are very young for zis sort of vork. Vere is your father?'

To which I replied: 'I fear my father is dead. He died of the Big C.'

'The Big C?' the prince inquired.

'Yes,' I said. 'He was on the *Titanic*.'

He simply stared at me, bemused. Through his monocle.

And then it occurred to me: perhaps this joke would be more successful after the mid-1970s, when the American actor John Wayne would coin the phrase "the Big C" as a euphemism for cancer, in order to make his own crippling disease sound more masculine and to give the impression that he was about to be gunned down in the street rather than shrivelling up into a weakened husk. *Before* the mid-1970s, it rather lacked something.

For many years, I bore a grudge against John Wayne, whom I saw as singularly responsible for the failure of an otherwise promising two-liner. When I eventually inherited one of my father's experimental facilities, I found a way of venting this resentment. I used the laboratories to groom a selection of cancer cells into six-foot-tall masses of carcinogenic tissue with formative arms and legs, then equipped them with black hats and six-shooters, and dispatched them to the mid-1970s with instructions to *actually* gun down John Wayne in the street. It pleases me to say that the Cancer Gang completed this mission with some gusto, although I note that Wayne's encyclopaedia entry still glosses over events by stating that he "died of cancer" rather than "died of a cancer that was quicker on the draw".

To this day, I still exchange Christmas cards with the leader of the Cancer Gang, Big Jim McTumour. I believe he now has plans to stand for election as the governor of some US state or other, having already acquired the backing of one of the larger tobacco companies. I wish him well in his career.

Family

The "Suicide Bustle": guaranteed to pass unnoticed through any airport metal detector, each skirt carries enough explosive to make the Wright Brothers realise that it may not be worth the bother.

So far, my father has dominated this memoir, and his brooding presence seems to hover above the story of my early life like one of the lion-kestrel hybrids of which he was so rightly proud. He was a cruel man, certainly; a sadist, a misanthrope, an abusive personality of the worst order; a poisoner, an assassin, a breeder of mistrust, and an enemy of all human civilisation; but on the other hand, he was also a man about whom one could not say "but on the other hand..." and end the sentence in any meaningful fashion.

I have said almost nothing about my mother, and this is perhaps unjust. It was she who had the painful duty of raising myself and my similarly experimental siblings, a task which can accurately be described as thankless, since our father let it be known that she would have to be destroyed if ever we thanked her. Even amidst the subterranean horror that comprised 85% of our family home, she attempted to show us some degree of kindness. I remember, quite vividly, that she would often serve us with our favourite meal of dinosaur turkeys: a popular convenience food at the time, the meat of dinosaurs that had been mashed into the shapes of turkeys and then covered in breadcrumbs. She always stood between myself and my father's wrath, and on more than one occasion, between myself and my father's lethal spores.

Yet my mother died while I was still an infant. She died, curious as it now seems, at Denver International Airport during a rare excursion to the twenty-first century. In fact, there has long been a suspicion in my mind that she was making some effort to flee the family estate, perhaps understanding that lion-kestrels have a pathological dislike of the Colorado climate and would be unlikely to pursue her there. However, we had the misfortune to arrive at Denver during the height of a "terror scare". You may be aware that in the wake of any terrorist incident, the common practice amongst airport security personnel is to ensure the safety of any object taken aboard an aircraft: if a mother should take (for example) a bottle of her own breast-milk with which to feed her child, then she will be required to taste it in front of airport staff, to demonstrate that it *is* milk and not liquid explosive. Such was the case with my mother, and as requested, she took a sip from a container of milk which she had prepared for my consumption that very day. Tragically, she was unaware that my father had spent several years performing experimental procedures on her person with the sole motivation that she *should* be able to lactate liquid explosive.

Whenever I think of my mother now, I always remember a great warmth. At least until the airport fire services arrived.

L'Academie Sinistaire (Part One)

The Syndicate's trade mission to Uganda, 1974 (with myself on the far left, in the distinctive devil-rabbit mask), during which it was my privilege to explain the potential of Evil Ventriloquism to General Amin. Mere minutes after this photograph was taken, the

gentleman on the right was sentenced to execution, having apparently been heard to say: 'Who d'you think you *are, fatty, the King of Scotland?'*

I have already stated that my father sired me with the express desire of creating an heir, a first-born son to continue the family name should he somehow forget the secret of eternal life, or suffer some accident that might preclude any possibility of his returning from the grave. It must be said that as a child, I showed great promise in this direction, and it was agreed in underworld circles that I would be a most suitable replacement if the unthinkable were to occur. My father was determined that I should begin at the bottom, both figuratively and literally, as a "fag" to one of the less seemly gang-lords of nineteenth-century Limehouse. The concept of "fag" was taken a great deal more literally in those days, since one's elders would inevitably feel a deep-seated religious shame after exposing an underling to their bestial inclinations, and many fine young catamites were set alight after the act as a method of purging their masters' guilt. Of course, it was always part of my "design brief" that I should be flame-retardant, hence my father's interference in the lactations of my mother [see **Family**]. Indeed, I once spited my employer by immolating myself *during* the cruel act of sodomy, thus earning myself the nickname "Johnny Kebab". This alone was enough to guarantee my notoriety, even before I came of age.

And so, as I entered puberty, I became the youngest-ever initiate of l'Academie Sinistaire in Paris. Across the centuries, this institution has been responsible for some of the world's most impressively monstrous and amoral talent. Springheeled Jack; Chairman Mao; Idi Amin; that man who tried to rape Steven Spielberg; all of them show clear signs of the academy's influence or conditioning. While the Royal Society has oft been referred to as "The Invisible College", l'Academie Sinistaire has become known as "The Invisible College That's Probably Standing Behind You *Right Now*". As a highly-regarded figure in such circles, my father merely had to pull a few strings in order to guarantee my interview with the academy's Five-Man Council, having already ensured that strings were attached to the limbs of over half its members. He saw himself as the great puppet-master of the underworld, and had little time for the purely metaphorical.

The Five-Man Council was, and is, the inner circle of the academy. In terms of both

deviousness and deviousity, its members are considered to be the elite of the elite. Whereas a competent sinister mastermind is capable of making plans within plans, and a true Napoleon of Crime may be able to conceive of plans within plans within plans (or, at best, plans within plans within plans within plans), the members of the Five-Man Council are capable of operating at a level of nine pico-plans. Many of these plans are so intricate that the details are invisible to the naked eye, the naked eye in question being that of Sir Robert Peel, whose left iris was scientifically stripped in 1850 as a method of testing plan-visibility. At the time of my own initiation, the Five-Man Council consisted of individuals whose criminal exploits would become the stuff of legend during the twentieth century. The Man Who Sold the World; the Man With the Golden Gun; the Man Who Shot Liberty Valance; the Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo; and Natalie Imbruglia.

The presence of Miss Imbruglia on the Council would come as a surprise to many, yet it should be pointed out that she was very much a "stop-gap" member of the assembly, hurriedly introduced to the upper ranks of the academy after the disgrace of the Man With the Child in His Eyes. The Man With the Child in His Eyes had always been regarded as something of a weak link, but it had eventually been pointed out that having a child in one's eyes is in no way actually *sinister*, just hugely unsanitary. Worse, it had come to light that the child had only become lodged there by accident. For years, it had been assumed that there must have been *some* plan behind it, perhaps a scheme so convoluted that even the other four Men remained ignorant of its true nature. But it had emerged that some time earlier, he had simply been cycling along a dirt track when a child had been thrown up into his eyes along with the usual dust and grit. He had never been able to remove it, and had thus spent some years nurturing it as an affectation.

The day of my initiation into the academy was perhaps the proudest of my life, and even now, I have difficulty remembering this period of my existence without a mixture of profound melancholy and curious arousal. I had no way of knowing that within a few short years, I would find myself leaving l'Academie Sinistaire in disgrace, or that this was the beginning of a schism between myself and my father which would never be healed.

However, it was, which is why I said that.

Longevity

The climactic cat-fight from the final episode of Desperate Housewives*, 2011.*

After being admitted into the ranks of the master-poisoners, professional monstrosities and whoremonger-assassins of l'Academie Sinistaire [see the previous entry], I was granted an official position as head of one of my father's own experimental facilities. These laboratories had previously been home to some of his most endearingly murderous creations, and now it was my role in life to refine the classic designs of nineteenth-century eugenics for a new age, to devise - so to speak - a Better Giant Scorpion.

At that time, the most fashionable and profitable field of research was longevity. True, my own father possessed the secret of eternal life, but his survival over a period of centuries was a highly involved three-stage system which required him to (1) die; (2) control an army of fanatical underlings who would move Heaven and Earth to recover (and ritually purify) his corpse; and (3) return from the grave when the forces of law and order were least expecting it. This process was becoming somewhat awkward, especially since the forces of law and order increasingly *expected* him to return from the grave, thus forcing him to wait for longer and longer periods in order to complete step (3). Besides which, it was felt that the "dying" and "controlling an army of fanatical underlings" elements were too time-consuming for most consumers, and that there was a definite niche for a more market-friendly form of immortality.

Cosmetics was clearly the wave of the future, and much capital was poured into expeditions

to find the Fountain of Youth, as preliminary reports had suggested that its waters might reverse at least five of the Seven Signs of Ageing. For many years, it was believed to be mythical, the argument being that if such a fountain existed then the African continent would be overflowing with eternally young native populations. In fact, it was finally located in a region of central Africa which had been mapped by errant American adventurers, who had failed to realise the significance of the fountain and simply attached a "No Coloureds" sign to it. Another promising discovery was the Flame of Life possessed by the beautiful Queen Ayesha, "She Who Must Be Obeyed", though the regenerative effects of this process were brought into question when it was discovered that many of her followers had begun to refer to her as "She Who's Getting On a Bit, But You Still Would, Wouldn't You".

Myself and my compatriots took a more pragmatic view of the youth-and-beauty industry. As citizens of the twenty-first century, you may be familiar with a skin-moisturising product known as "Hydra Energetic", and I can reveal that it was our laboratories which first developed this balm. The original formula only differed from the modern product in that we used real Hydras. As will become apparent if one consults the excellent documentary *Jason and the Argonauts*, the Hydra was a many-headed reptile which grew two new heads whenever one was divorced from its body, and we quickly realised that this was a boon in terms of mass-production. We eventually dedicated an entire factory to the purpose of head-culling, in which the machinery was tuned to remove (and process) each new head within moments of its growth.

The flaw in this method - and again, those familiar with *Jason and the Argonauts* will already be aware of the difficulty - is that the teeth of a Hydra can easily grow into fearsome skeleton warriors, who are immune to most forms of weaponry and can only be slain if led off a cliff. We took the precaution of siting our factory on the edge of a small Cornish island, with a special bone-chute leading directly out into the sea. Our competitors, copying our methods with reckless abandon, were less careful. In particular, the L'Oreal company had endless problems with skeleton warriors getting into the machinery or attempting to form unions. Though L'Oreal now uses "Mock-Hydra" in its Hydra Energetic, a few of the living skeletons created in this early period are still in existence today: emaciated, unwanted husks, they continue to haunt the company even though they clearly have no place in the modern world. This explains why Andie MacDowell is still L'Oreal's spokesperson.

The only side-effect of our own manufacturing process was that the seabed off the coast of Cornwall become littered with thousands upon thousands of human bones, but in recent years, we have discovered this to be an excellent way of attracting televisual osteo-archaeologist Dr Alice Roberts.

Love

Though tiger-hunting is frowned upon in the twenty-first century, well-bred Victorian tigers would practice at being rugs while still in the wild.

As a lifelong bachelor, I have often been asked: "What do you look for in a woman?" To which I usually reply: lice. Especially if I happen to be purchasing her from one of the smaller and less reputable West African villages, in which case, checking the teeth is also important.

Questions of romance have been brought to mind, however tangentially, by a piece of correspondence lately received from a reader of this aethernet journal. He writes:

Dear ____,

You've hinted in your blog that you were one of the first people to travel between the nineteenth century and the twenty-first, and I've been told that your family played some part in the development of commercial time-travel. Is this true?

Like a lot of people my age, I time-travelled for the first time in the early 1980s, when it was all new and exciting. The first time-machine I ever saw belonged to a friend at school, whose parents were always the first to get new gadgets. It was one of those clunky old Betamax time-machines, and the tapes you had to feed into them were about the size of a brick, not like now. His parents had bought the tapes for "Holland During the Early Renaissance" and "The Birth of Swiss Factory-Farming", which they thought would be educational, but my friend knew someone who could get pirate copies of "Potato Famine Irishmen Start Eating Each Other" and "Sluts of the French Revolution".

It was brilliant! Every day after school, we'd go back to his house while his parents were out, then use the machine to go and watch Marie Antoinette's head being cut off. We could get close enough to hear the blade going "shhhhwwwww... chonk!", and then the executioner would hold the head up, and there'd be this spray of blood all over us, and we'd go "eeeeuuww!", but all the French people in the crowd would go "look, look, there are children, let them dip their fingers in the blood of the tyrant-queen so that they might share in this moment!", and we'd be really nervous and trying not to giggle but we'd dip our fingers in the blood anyway, only we'd start flicking it at each other, and all the Frenchmen would start laughing and chucking Marie Antoinette's guts around as well, and then we'd hear history going EEUUUUURRRRRRKKKK in the machine, and we'd realise that the tape was getting stuck, and then there'd be this great big rip in the universe and we'd be sucked out of 1792 and get thrown back into my friend's living room, except that we'd have blood all over us and there'd be a piece of the queen's colon on the sofa, and then we'd hear my friend's mum's key in the door and my friend would try to hide the guts while I got the tape out of the machine, except that it'd get jammed and I'd pull it so hard that it'd break and erase all the years between 1752 and 1821, and then his mum would come in and say "why are you covered in blood?", and we'd say "oh, no, it's not blood, it's just wine because we were being anointed by Pope Pius VI", and she'd go "tt" and then make us some dinosaur turkeys.

It's sad, really, that kids today take time-travel for granted and can't experience that kind of

thrill. So, thanks to your family for inventing it!

A moving sentiment, however common the author. For I, too, have known that first rush of excitement on realising that one is no longer confined to one's own era. For myself, it came during my first eighteen months at l'Academie Sinistaire [see the preceding entries]. The principles of temporal perambulation had been known for some time, yet it was only in those early years of my career that the process was fine-tuned, so that one could travel from century to century with only a marginal risk of blowing a hole in one's own genetic structure and condemning oneself to a life of biological vampirism in an attempt to alleviate the agony. My correspondent recalls the joy of experiencing historical violence first-hand, though this had limited appeal for me - after all, it may be said that no violence has ever been more rewarding than that of my native nineteenth century - and I had far more interest in the possibility of romance.

Though I was only *minimally* deformed at this stage, it was already clear to me that no women would consort with my physical form without the compensation of money or a career in showbusiness, and in those days it was considered bad form to transplant one's brain into a more attractive cadaver (although, due to the notorious hypocrisy of the Victorian era, it *was* perfectly acceptable to transplant one's brain into the body of a giant murderous gorilla... today, historians shake their heads in disbelief at this antiquated double-standard). I therefore wondered if my ideal mate might be found in some century other than my own. Surely, there was some point in humanity's cultural development where I might be considered acceptable, even attractive? I had already visited five different alternative futures in which each individual member of Girls Aloud was seen as the embodiment of female beauty - and, perhaps less likely still, one where all five of them were at least considered "all right" - so it seemed quite clear that there were no limitations to human desire.

My excursions were not greatly successful. I *did* discover those eras in which women require the smallest possible amount of money or showbusiness before granting their favours (New York in 1979 and London in 2008, respectively), yet at no point did I encounter any individual who might be considered a "soulmate" in any meaningful sense. Perhaps the

closest I came to a truly heartfelt relationship was at the far, far end of evolutionary history, an epoch wherein all human beings are degenerating into a primordial slime, and females are willing to procreate with anything at all in the hope of keeping the species solvent: I sympathised with this sort of desperation, and felt that I shared a genuine understanding with one of the natives, at least until realising that she was *not* a fabulous half-human mer-creature - as I had believed - but a disembodied pair of lips which had accidentally become stuck to a dolphin's back. Nor had I been using the blow-hole for its intended purpose.

Since this grave disappointment, my only attempt at a romance of any description was with a young Heather Mills during the latter part of the twentieth century: this relationship collapsed when it transpired that one of her limbs was hollow and filled with an army of tiny Eastern European prostitutes, who crept out in the middle of the night, opened the front door of my home, and allowed a horde of Polish immigrants to invade the premises while I slept.

These days, when anybody asks me "what do you look for in a woman?", I always reply: other, smaller women. One cannot be too careful.

L'Academie Sinistaire (Part Two)

I remain unclear as to what might be happening in this picture, as I was drunk when it was taken.

Previously, I described my indoctrination into l'Academie Sinistaire, the institute responsible for educating some of the world's most appalling non-Islamic criminal talent. I related my appearance before the academy's Five-Man Council, an assemblage of legendary malefactors comprised of the Man Who Sold the World, the Man With the Golden Gun, the Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, the Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo, and Natalie Imbruglia (this last member being a hurried replacement for the Man With the Child in His Eyes, then recently disgraced). And I revealed that I had at length been made the custodian of one of my father's experimental facilities, with all the responsibility and man-eating octopi that this entails.

Perhaps this responsibility was too great for me; perhaps it was fate that I should fail, before even coming of age; perhaps it was entirely the fault of others, all of whom should clearly be killed. But before long I found myself brought before the Five-Man Council once again, this time in chains, accused of committing one of the gravest crimes imaginable in those diabolical circles. The official charge was "Leaving Alone Things That Man Was Meant to Meddle In", an offence that was considered an affront to everything for which the academy stood. To this day, I maintain that the entire affair was nothing more than the result of a simple clerical error: it was a busy day, there were a great many Things to be sorted into the relevant "To Be Left Alone" and "To Be Meddled In" stacks, and "tables" - one of the many, many things which the academy had ear-marked for meddling, after being left alone for far too long - was inadvertently filed in the wrong out-tray. An elementary error, and I still have to ask whether my punishment was commensurate with my failure. After all, I was never *personally* in charge of the filing. I shall not cast aspersions by naming the individual who made that fateful mistake, an individual who had been demoted to this bureaucratic role by the Council itself. I shall simply say that if he could have been bothered to get that f***ing child out of his eyes, then perhaps he might have been able to see what he was doing.

Yet it was I who had to face the academy's judgement. Called into the presence of the Five-Man Council, I was stripped; humiliated; abused; even violated. Then, once the pleasantries were over, my trial began.

The outcome was inevitable, the sentence lenient by academy standards. My position would

be taken from me, my deformity would be reclassified as "ugly" rather than "monstrous", and - worst of all - I was to receive no more assistance from any criminal interest controlled by my father. Even once this judgement had been passed, I still hoped that my he might pull strings to reduce the severity of the sentence, yet it quickly became clear that he accepted the Council's ruling. When he eventually *did* pull strings, it was only to make the Council-members' arms flap around and make rude gestures at me. On that very day, my father turned his back on me: an uncomfortable experience, since his spine was tattooed with a picture of my own face being eaten by owls.

I have only a limited memory of the subsequent months. I recall that in my anger and self-obsession, I conceived of a truly juvenile revenge, and plotted to assemble my own Five-Man Council to rival that of the original academy. It was, of course, doomed to failure.
The *real* stars of the underworld were already ensconced within the walls of l'Academie Sinistaire, leaving me with the second-rate figures of criminal society. The Man Who Sold the Welsh; the Man With the Pricing Gun; the Man Who Nudged Liberty Valance; the Man Who Broke Some Plates at Monte Carlo; and Natalie Imbruglia. It was a futile gesture, and this rival Council was dissolved after a single assembly. I forget, now, whether I mean that literally or not.

It was my darkest hour, and not simply because the Council gouged my eyes out as a "P.S.".

Africa

You can witness the full horror of the Congolese breeding experiment by typing "Um Bongo" into YouTube, or by imagining what it'd be like if actual terrifying events in the Congo were replaced by the antics of cartoon animals.

'Way down deep in the middle of the Congo,
A hippo took an apricot, a guava and a mango.
He stuck it with the others, and he danced a dainty tango.
The rhino said, 'I know, we'll call it Um Bongo!'

Um Bongo! Um Bongo! They drink it in the Congo!
Um Bongo! Um Bongo! They drink it in the Congo!

The python picked the passion fruit, the marmoset the mandarin,
The parrot painted packets that the whole caboodle landed in.
So when it comes to sun and fun and goodness in the jungle,
They all prefer the sunny, funny one they call Um Bongo!

Um Bongo! Um Bongo! They drink it in the Congo!
Um Bongo! Um Bongo! They drink it in the Congo!'

After eighteen months working as an undercover agent in Africa, this was the report I sent back to British Intelligence. They failed to act on it until it was far, far too late.

But I should explain how I came to be in this unsettling position. After my expulsion from l'Academie Sinistaire and my separation from my father's criminal empire [see previous entries], I found myself prone to long periods of adolescent rage and depression, during which I elected to take the Queen's shilling and sign up with the British military. This may seem an improbable career move, yet there was a distinct logic in it. Firstly, though my father may have been a half-blood abomination and one of the world's leading racial stereotypes, my mother was not only English but the daughter of a military family. My maternal grandfather fought with Wellington at Waterloo, and I use the phrase "fought with" quite carefully. The dispute began when Wellington stole my grandfather's Hob-Nobs: my grandfather responded by taking the boots which would one day share the Duke's name, and filling them with Frenchman's sick (which was, at the time, regarded as the most insulting variety of sick). Yet more importantly, the army life provided me with refreshing new arenas for criminal exploitation and barely-concealed sexual parasitism. I soon found myself under General Gordon in the Sudan, and again, I use the word "under" quite carefully. A corps of sweating, hormonal young men, all of them missing the comforts of home; a city whose prostitutes were, quite frankly, pricing themselves out of the market; all it takes is for somebody to shout "bundle!" in the barracks-room, and one can easily find oneself buried beneath a sybaritic mound of male flesh and handlebar moustaches, with the officer class in their rightful position at the top.

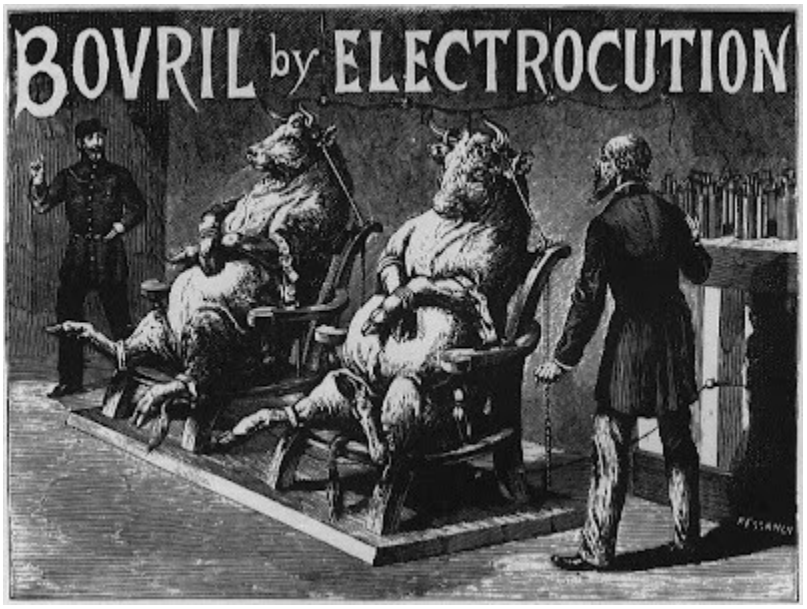
It should be remembered that at this point I was still, in modern parlance, a "teenager". It should also be remembered that in the nineteenth century, a great many adolescents had been granted far too much power over their fellow man, even beyond the young Prince Albert's insistence on using Negro midgets to play conkers. Ever since I mentioned the doctrine of "maternal impression" in this journal (the theory that if a woman should happen to be startled during pregnancy, then her child might take on the form of whatever object

may have startled her), I have repeatedly been asked why the people of the Victorian age failed to exploit this strange biological quirk. The truth is that many did, but for the most part only the teenagers, who had nothing better to do. One would often see young scientists of the "evil" persuasion, loitering at bus stops in their top hats and Evanescence T-shirts, waiting to leap out at passing mothers-to-be after donning the likenesses of apes, spiders, and other such alarming creations. If one of these students caused an expectant woman to faint, then he would high-five his colleagues, confident in the knowledge that she would soon be giving birth to a child with pronounced mandibles or the wrong number of eyes.

You may have heard of the notorious Dr Moreau, from the account of his career penned by H. G. Wells, in which we learn that Moreau stocked his secret island with half-human, half-animal monstrosities of his own devising. What the book fails to record is that the doctor was only nineteen at the time, and insisted on breeding men with beasts because "monkey-people would be, like, really cool". As it happens, it was Moreau's experiments in Africa which first brought him to the attention of the authorities, and once I had been transferred from the army to British Intelligence - a favour granted by General Gordon, grateful to have had such a sensitive and "giving" young private under his command, if only for a few magical weeks - my first undercover assignment related to the unusual animal activity in the Congo region. As we have already established, what I found there was an aberrant ecosystem of dancing hippopotami, snakes capable of harvesting fruit for a capitalist incentive, and exotic birds with a rare artistic streak. I still occasionally hear their terrible war-cry in my dreams, though I confess that it did eventually make a catchy jingle.

I would also like to mention that according to Sax Rohmer's (generally absurd) accounts of my father's life, he dressed in traditional Oriental robes and kept a marmoset as a familiar. If one were to consider the "Um Bongo" report in this light, then the otherwise grammatically-puzzling line "*the marmoset the mandarin*" may take on a new significance. Certainly, I have grave suspicions as to who might have funded Moreau's operations in the region. It amazes me that even now, few of those who read the report see anything strange about the presence of a small South American mammal in the African jungle.

Television



Sponsored by the Texas branch of the Angus steakhouse.

I shall gloss over the latter part of my career in British intelligence [see **Africa**], and merely note that it was my experiences in the darker and less sanitary reaches of the Empire - most particularly the affair of the White Iscariot, a tale for which the world is not yet ready, or at least for which the world has not yet offered a six-figure advance - which convinced me that my future lay in *the* future. I had, of course, travelled from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first on many occasions: as I may have intimated, my father was one of the loudest voices in the great "what's the best way of going forward a hundred years, being frozen in ice or using a special chair?" debate of 1895, and the early experimental process of time-travel was at least partly responsible for my current (thoroughly disfigured) condition. Yet until this point, the future-world of neon lights and utterly transparent government arms deals had been nothing more than a novelty. Now, I came to realise that the twenty-first century was destined to be my home no matter what, at least if I lived long enough and kept taking the monkey-gland serum.

Following the example of the so-called "Elephant Man" [see **Merrick, Joseph**], I saw that I might make something of a living as an attraction in the media circus of the latter twentieth century, since the audiences of this era were likely to enjoy my many anecdotes about life as the son of one of the world's best-known human abominations. I was correct in this assumption, though due to the social mores of the age, I found that I was only invited onto

the chat-shows of the 1970s if I could make these anecdotes involve golf in some way. I had similar difficulties in the late 1990s, especially when called upon to act as a historical pundit for the BBC's *I Love 1871*. After being seated in front of a camera and given basic instruction in the importance of the sound-bite, I was asked: "The Franco-Prussian War… what was *that* all about?" I responded by explaining that it was largely about Bismarck using the humiliation of France as a pretext for the reunification of Germany, and though the producers agreed that this was factually accurate, they felt that Johnny Vegas would probably be funnier.

It was only in the early years of the twenty-first century that I began to understand how one might properly exploit the mass-media to one's advantage. The turning-point came when I was hired as a consultant on the series *Whore Idol*.

Since I rarely stay in one era for more than a few months, I confess that I can no longer recall whether *Whore Idol* has already been broadcast in your world of 2008, or whether it may still be a year or two in your future. But all reputable critics agree that it was the epitome of the audience-participation game-show, and that its catchphrase - "One Ripper, Five Victims, Sixty-Million Witnesses" - encapsulated the Zeitgeist of its day. When the format of the programme was first conceived, there was some concern that it might find itself short of contestants: there was a feeling amongst the more conservative commissioning editors that few young women of the modern age would willingly compete to be transported back to Whitechapel in 1888 and ritually gutted by a pathological misogynist, even on prime-time ITV. How very wrong those nay-sayers were. In fact, the programme's only failing was that after the first ratings-grabbing Autumn of Fear, there was nowhere for the format to go. A second series was staged in Yorkshire, but without the fog, malnutrition and poisonous miasma of the Victorian original, it was never likely to have the same impact. I believe a celebrity version has now been proposed, yet so far only Phil Spector has shown any interest in taking part, and only on the "giving" end.

Speaking for myself, *Whore Idol* taught me a lesson so obvious that with hindsight it seems entirely instinctive: quite simply, television *is* cruelty. In much the same way that a young street-urchin or adolescent thug will be far more willing to rob, stab, or generally abuse an innocent bystander if there are *other* street-urchins in the vicinity to watch him do it - in

much the same way that a man will happily laugh at a cripple if there are other men to laugh along with him, or that a mob will tear a victim to pieces in ways which might seem unconscionable to a single human being - the inevitable result of pointing cameras at an entire population is that the population will begin to destroy itself *purely for the sake of anyone who may be watching*. Whenever one hears a news story to the effect that an urban hoodlum has randomly assaulted a member of the public, for no other purpose that to film the attack and display it on your modern-day "YouTube", one may be assured that this is in no way aberrant behaviour. This is simply what the concept of television *does*, when one takes away all pretence of "standards of decency".

I feel confident in stating that here in 2008, this rather twentieth-century "standards of decency" concept is wholly alien to the population, or certainly to that part of the population which is actually responsible for television. It is, after all, an affront to consumer freedom. This understanding is what made *Whore Idol* such a success (or, perhaps, such an inevitability), and it was during its production that I "found my voice" in the modern world. Because television is, not by its content but by its very nature, the most evil of all media.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

For now, the true author of this journal must remain nameless, voiceless, and 28% more shrouded in mystery than any other shadowy figure from the murky London underworld of the late 1800s. He must also remain faceless, since medical science has not yet found a way to reverse the side-effects of what he simply calls "the process" (patented 1894, outlawed 1895, drug-dumped in Somalia 1996). We can only tell you that:

1. He's the son of one of the three leading criminal masterminds of the nineteenth century. Oh, you know. The one with the moustache.

2. He's the co-founder of the White Peacock Arms Company, the only weapons manufacturer which still takes pride in breeding giant scorpions for the Oriental market as well as producing landmines for regimes across the globe. He's also the only living CEO of the Company, in accordance with the principles of natural selection.

3. His reminiscences of his own century, and his thoughts on our "modern" age, have been transcribed to the aethernet in 2008 by **Lawrence Miles**.

THE SHOP

This week's top-selling items from the White Peacock Arms Catalogue...

1. THE KITTEN GRENADE

It kills with cuteness! (Cat. No. 04804815.)

2. THE MUNGLING HELMET

Anyone caught in its baleful Medusa-like stare is transformed into the likeness of Roald Dahl. Banned as a weapon under six international conventions, it's available now after being reclassified as a party novelty. (Cat. No. 00551943.)

3. THE MY-LITTLE-PONY GUN

Our best-selling and most versatile firearm, the My-Little-Pony gun fires three types of pony: Butterscotch for sniper fire, Bluebell for maximum penetration, or Peachblossom for crowd dispersal. (Cat. No. 01320875.) See also the historical footnote below.

MORE ABOUT THE MY-LITTLE-PONY GUN

This product has a long and distinguished provenance. Though the Pony gun itself was developed in the 1980s as a camera-friendly riot control weapon for the South African market, it was modelled on the "swine cannons" used during the First Crusade, circa 1098 AD. These devices would fire whole pigs over the walls of Muslim cities, the subsequent porksplosion causing both loss of life and gratuitous offence. As fans of popular culture will know, this was the inspiration for the line from the Beatles' classic "I Am the Walrus": 'See how they run, like pigs from a gun.'

ABOUT BEASTHOUSE.CO.UK

The original Beasthouse was a revolutionary "eugenics boutique" first opened in 1897, where the techniques pioneered by Dr Alphonse Moreau allowed affluent customers to have their favourite servants cross-bred with their pets. In fact, the establishment was originally named "Beasthouse & Co (UK)": the name was shortened after it began receiving packages intended for "Bagpuss & Co", a non-capitalist social engineering experiment which had recently been opened in the same neighbourhood, disguised as a shop. "Beasthouse.co.uk" has been the address ever since.

CREDITS

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